

Rebel Recruitment and Repertoires of Violence

Abstract:

The conventional wisdom is that militant organizations that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more restrained in their treatment of civilians on a variety of dimensions. However, in this paper, we argue that greater reliance on ideological appeals will be associated with restraint in the use of some forms of violence, but not others. We expect that because of normative commitments, institutional constraints, and internal cohesion, ideologically driven rebels will be less likely to engage in sexual violence. However, for the same reasons, we also expect that ideologically committed recruits are often motivated to perpetrate other forms of lethal and non-lethal, non-sexual violence. As a result, ideologically motivated recruits will employ repertoires of violence that show restraint in the use of sexual violence, but *not* other forms of abuse. Using novel data on the recruitment practices of rebel groups across the world, we find evidence for our argument.

A prevailing wisdom is that rebel groups that rely more on material incentives, relative to ideological appeals, for recruitment, will be more abusive towards civilians. Specifically, material incentives are thought to attract opportunistic individuals who seek short-term benefits, but who are not invested in the long-term goals of their organizations (Weinstein 2005, 2007). Materially driven recruits are expected to act in their own best interest, even when it undermines the goals of their groups, while ideologically driven rebels behave in ways that benefit their group. Consequently, ideologically motivated recruits are believed to show significant restraint in their treatment of civilians, while their materially driven counterparts are expected to engage in a wide array of abuses against civilians for self-gain (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006).

However, much of the literature tends to focus on whether or not rebel groups victimize civilian populations rather than examining the variation in the combinations or repertoires of violence they employ (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017). However, the repertoires employed by rebels do vary extensively, suggesting it is not just a choice of whether to victimize civilians, but what form that victimization may take. This dynamic is particularly relevant to the literature on rebel recruitment, as rebel leaders often employ ideological indoctrination to get rebels to show restraint in some contexts, but to encourage violence in others (Hoover Green 2016, 2018).

In particular, there are rebel groups that abuse civilians using diverse repertoires yet show significant restraint in the use of sexual violence (e.g., Wood 2009), despite the fact that literature on rebel recruitment tends to lump multiple forms of violence together (e.g., Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). Prominent militant movements including the LTTE in Sri Lanka (Wood 2009), Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path) in Peru (Leiby 2009a), rebels in El Salvador (Cohen, Hoover Green, and Wood 2013), and the PKK in Turkey (Haner, Cullen, and Benson 2020) terrorized civilians in a variety of manners but had strong internal prohibitions

against the use of sexual violence directed at the same populations they victimize. Data from the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023), which contains information on a variety of human rights abuses by rebel organizations, reveals that just over half of the 327 organizations in the dataset had at least one year in which they perpetrated at least one type of abuse against civilians, but did not engage in sexual violence.

Thus, in this paper, we argue that prior work on rebel recruitment and violence against civilians has both theoretically and empirically overlooked how rebel mobilization strategies affect a wide variety of violent repertoires, not just general patterns of restraint or abuse. Specifically, we posit that groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve the use of some forms of abuse against civilians, but which show restraint in the perpetration of sexual violence.

We argue that normative commitments, institutional constraints, and internal cohesion, will make ideologically driven recruits more likely to show restraint in the use of sexual violence. However, in other contexts, ideological beliefs can spur the use of violence. Consequently, ideologically committed rebels often have the incentive to show restraint in the use of sexual violence but *not* other forms of abuse, such as killing, torture, and forced displacement, among other human rights violations. Thus, ideology will not always result in the restraint of abuses against civilians in general, even if it leads to restraint in specific types of violence. We posit that ideologically motivated recruits will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve restraint in sexual violence but the perpetration of other forms of abuses. Materially driven recruits, in contrast, lack the same normative commitments, institutional constraints, and internal cohesion, and are thus more likely to employ broader repertoires of violence.

To evaluate this argument, we employ novel data from the Rebel Appeals and Incentives Dataset (RAID), which contains information on the recruitment strategies of 232 rebel organizations that operate around the world (Soules 2023). RAID contains an ordinal measure of the extent to which rebel groups rely on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, allowing us to directly test hypotheses about rebel recruitment tactics and violence against civilians. We pair RAID with the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023), which contains data on a diversity of lethal and non-lethal human rights abuses perpetrated by rebel movements. These data allow us to investigate how groups' recruitment strategies affect their repertoires of violence.

We find that groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, are more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve the use of some types of violence, but restraint in the use of sexual violence. Subsequent tests reveal that, even when various forms of violence against civilians are analyzed separately, reliance on ideological appeals curtails the use of sexual violence but not other forms of abuse.

This paper offers several contributions. First, it challenges the conventional wisdom that rebel groups will be more restrained in the use of a wide variety of abuses against civilians when they rely more on ideological appeals than material incentives for recruitment (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). Instead, our results indicate that ideological-based recruitment strategies reduce rebels' use of sexual violence, but not other forms of violence against civilians.

Second and relatedly, it provides one of the only, to our knowledge, quantitative assessments of how the persuasive recruitment practices of a large number of rebel organizations affect their repertoires of violence. In their study on civilian victimization, Humphreys and Weinstein (2006)

collected data on the actual recruitment practices of armed factions, but their analysis covered only groups in Sierra Leone. Cross-conflict and cross-group quantitative studies tend to use measures of rebel organizations' broader ideologies and/or material resources (e.g., Weinstein 2007; Asal and Rethemeyer 2008; Wood 2014; Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2018; Walsh et al. 2018; Whitaker, Walsh, and Conrad 2019; Basedau, Deitch, and Zellman 2022).

However, the broader ideology and material resources of militant organizations do not always map on well to their actual recruitment practices (Herbst 2000; Soules 2023). For instance, rebel movements do not always employ their material wealth for recruitment (Soules 2023). As a result, the association between natural resource wealth and violence against civilians could be driven by some other mechanism, such as the lack of dependence on civilian support decreasing the incentive to show restraint. Thus, the use of data that are specific to the recruitment practices of armed organizations allows us to assess theoretical mechanisms that are specific to mobilization strategies.

Third, prior quantitative work on recruitment and civilian victimization often does not fully disaggregate the repertoires of violence available to rebels, nor does it distinguish between different combinations of these violent tactics (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017). There are a couple of exceptions, as Humphreys and Weinstein (2006) distinguish between rape and food extraction and Soules (2023) analyzes how rebel recruitment practices affect the perpetration of single and multi-perpetrator rape.

However, neither study considers variation in the combinations of violence that rebel groups employ.¹ Additionally, while Soules (2023) employs data on wartime rape from the Repertoires of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (RSVAC) Dataset (Dumaine et al. 2022), we examine sexual violence more generally, not just rape, as there are often different logics underpinning different forms of sexual violence (Cohen 2016). Thus, this analysis also serves as a further test of the strength of the evidence linking rebel recruitment tactics to sexual violence.

Fourth, we make a theoretical contribution by distinguishing between the causes of sexual violence and other forms of abuses, contributing to the literature that highlights the characteristics that make sexual violence unique, in some ways, from other abuses against civilians (e.g., Cohen 2017). We posit that the normative and institutional constraints, and internal cohesion, associated with ideological recruitment incentivize some violent tactics but not others.

Fifth, this paper contributes to the growing body of research that highlights the importance of ideology in civil conflicts (e.g., Ugarriza and Craig 2013; Wood and Thomas 2017; Schubiger and Zelina 2017; Leader Maynard 2019; Blair et al. 2020; Keels and Wiegand 2020; Hafez, Gade, and Gabbay 2021; Revkin and Wood 2021; Basedau, Deitch, and Zellman 2022; Stewart 2022), including in rebel recruitment (e.g., Eck 2014; Oppenheim et al. 2015; Walch 2018; Hanson 2021; Parkinson 2021; Plapinger 2022; Thaler 2022).

As a road map for the rest of the paper, we begin by examining what the prior literature has to say about the relationship between rebel recruitment and civilian victimization. We then

¹ For their main analysis, Humphreys and Weinstein (2006) created an index variable capturing the extent to which groups engage in abuses against civilians. However, this variable does not measure various combinations of violent tactics, but rather, overall levels of violence against civilians.

discuss how rebel recruitment strategies incentivize various forms of violence in different ways, including the specific repertoires of violence groups employ, and derive a central hypothesis. We then detail the research design and present the results. This is followed with illustrative examples to help further highlight the causal mechanisms. We conclude by discussing the implications of the results and directions for future research.

Recruitment and Violence

Recruitment appeals are expected to affect the motives and attitudes of the recruits they draw in, which helps shape how groups subsequently behave (Weinstein 2005, 2007). Said differently, the recruitment appeals rebel groups employ should affect both the types of individuals drawn in and their propensity or susceptibility to indoctrination. Thus, groups' mobilization strategies affect the willingness of recruits to engage in certain forms of violence from the outset *and* the probability they can be indoctrinated or socialized into engaging in specific types of abuses.

Again, a common expectation is that rebel groups will be more likely to engage in indiscriminate violence against civilians if they rely more on material incentives than ideological appeals to mobilize recruits. However, there are also ways in which ideology can sometimes promote violence. Thus, depending on its type and framing, ideology can have either a restraining or encouraging effect on violence (Straus 2012; Sarwari 2021). We consider these issues below.

Ideology and Restraint

Militant organizations sometimes employ violence against civilians to achieve a variety of objectives. However, Humphreys and Weinstein (2006) explain that, because violence often leads to substantial civilian backlash and loss of support, rebel leaders try to prevent cadres from overemploying violence against civilians. Loss of civilian support can make it difficult for rebel movements to achieve their objectives.

Humphreys and Weinstein note that individual rebels often face a tradeoff between the within-group social benefits of showing restraint and the private benefits they can garner from abusing civilians, such as looting their resources. Humphreys and Weinstein posit that when members share common goals and ideologies, they will be more likely to engage in, and sustain, cooperative behavior to achieve these goals. Consequently, they expect that groups that recruit with material incentives will be more violent towards civilians than those that employ ideological appeals because recruits in the former type of organization value private rewards more while those in the latter category will work together to achieve common goals. These goals are more difficult to achieve if groups lose civilian support because of their abusiveness.

Weinstein (2005, 2007) argues that when groups use social and political ties to organize an effective and cohesive fighting force, they often benefit from the use of selective violence to maintain control over civilian populations. However, Weinstein also explains that opportunistic rebels will instead engage in indiscriminate acts of violence, such as arbitrary killings, looting, and destroying property, all of which hamper the ability of groups to achieve their goals. A similar logic links material-based recruitment strategies to wartime rape (Cohen 2013a). Sexual violence has been conceptualized as part of the “spoils of war” for opportunistic combatants (Mueller 2000, Mitchell 2004).

Norms associated with specific ideologies also play an important role in restraining the behavior of rebels. Balcells and Kalyvas (2010) expect that Revolutionary Socialist groups are less likely to victimize civilians because of normative commitments. Relatedly, ideology shapes how rebels govern their constituents (Balcells and Kalyvas 2010, Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014), and thus, their patterns of violence as well (Balcells and Stanton 2021). Groups with broad domestic constituencies, such as left-wing movements, have the incentive to limit their use of violence to maintain support (Stanton 2013, 2016; Polo and Gleditsch 2016). Thus, if militant organizations employ recruitment appeals that draw on these ideologies, then they should be more likely to attract recruits who are committed to these norms.

Previous work shows that rebels are more likely to engage in both lethal and non-lethal forms of civilian victimization when they profit from the exploitation of natural resources (e.g., Cohen 2013a; Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2018; Walsh et al. 2018). These findings are thought to be consistent with the theoretical argument that material incentives draw in more violent recruits than ideological appeals. However, it is also important to consider the ways in which ideology can sometimes promote violence against civilians.

Ideology and Violence

Ideology helps shape the tactical choices of militant organizations, including the specific repertoires of violence they employ (Leader Maynard 2019; Revkin and Wood 2021). Thus, individuals with these ideological beliefs will be more likely to employ the specific repertoires of violence encouraged by their ideologies.

The ideological indoctrination process that recruits undergo once they join the organization is also relevant to the repertoires of violence they are willing to use. Hoover Green (2016) explains that there is a “Commander’s Dilemma,” in which rebel leaders must construct fighting forces that are willing to unhesitatingly employ violence in some contexts but show restraint in others. Hoover Green posits that rebel movements with stronger, internal political education programs are more effective at socializing recruits to shift their preferences to align more closely with that of the rebel leadership. Consequently, recruits that undergo stringent indoctrination will be more likely to obey their commanders. Hoover Green argues that this will result in such groups employing narrower repertoires of violence.

We expect that ideologically driven recruits will be more amenable to these socialization and indoctrination processes because (1) they are more willing to buy into groups’ ideologies as a function of the fact that they were persuaded by ideological recruitment appeals and (2) they are more likely to behave in ways that benefit their groups (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006), and thus, will be more likely to obey rebel commanders and not deviate from norms of the group.

Thus, based on this literature, we expect that ideological-based recruitment strategies, relative to material-based appeals, are more likely to attract recruits who already share the normative values of the groups (including beliefs in the appropriateness of violence) and who are more amenable to group socialization and indoctrination processes.

These dynamics are particularly relevant in light of the vast body of literature that examines the ways in which militant ideology contributes to violence against civilians. Contrary to the literature discussed earlier, other scholars argue that ideology is a key driving force behind political violence. For instance, prewar political polarization, which can forge fierce loyalties to different factions, is a strong predictor of violence against civilians during early stages of

conflicts (Balcells 2010, 2017). Mass violence is also often perpetrated by ideologically driven actors (Valentino 2004, 2014).

Certain ideologies spur more violence than others (Leader Maynard 2019). Asal and Rethemeyer (2008) argue that the extent to which an ideology promotes “othering” affects how violent its adherents are. Asal and Rethemeyer explain that when ideologies frame most civilians as potential converts, militant movements with these beliefs have the incentive to only use violence selectively, as they do not want to alienate potential supporters. However, they posit that ideologies, such as religious and ethnonationalist beliefs, that clearly distinguish between members of the in and out-group, result in greater indiscriminate violence. This is because members of the out-group are viewed as legitimate targets, and thus, indiscriminate violence is more likely to be employed to achieve a variety of objectives (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008).

Similarly, ideologies that have more exclusive audiences and foster greater out-group antagonism result in rebel groups shifting more of their resources to attack civilian, rather than military, targets (Polo and Gleditsch 2016; Polo 2020). Relatedly, rebel groups are more likely to abuse civilians in areas in which their enemies’ co-ethnics live (Fjelde and Hultman 2014). Some ideologies, such as right-wing and religious extremism are also linked to greater dogmatism and close-mindedness, which are associated with greater hostility towards out-groups and more violence (Jasko et al. 2022).

Ideology can sometimes drive non-lethal forms of violence as well. Sarwari (2021) argues that left-wing rebels are less likely to perpetrate sexual violence, while religious groups are more likely to, because their ideologies place a different value on gender equality. Ideological and identity-based issues can drive rebels to forcibly displace civilians (Steele 2011, 2019; Balcells

and Steele 2016). Ideological indoctrination of abducted recruits can also lower the costs of employing forced recruitment (Gates 2017).

This all suggests that ideology can sometimes promote civilian abuses, including indiscriminate violence, rather than restraining such behaviors. Thus, in the *context of recruitment*, ideological-based recruitment strategies might attract individuals who are willing to employ specific repertoires of violence because of their a priori ideological beliefs and their susceptibility to ideological indoctrination that promotes certain forms of violence. In the next section, we explore how ideological and material-based recruitment strategies shape variation in the types of violent repertoires that rebel groups employ.

Variation in Violent Repertoires

Ideology plays an important role in shaping the repertoires of violence groups employ (e.g., Revkin and Wood 2021). Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2017) critique Weinstein's (2005, 2007) theory about recruitment and violence, positing that the analysis would have been stronger if, among other dimensions, Weinstein had also examined variation in the repertoires of violence employed by groups, not just whether they showed restraint. They also note that if Weinstein is correct, ideologically driven groups should employ much narrower repertoires of violence.

As discussed above, ideologically driven recruits are both more likely to come in with normative beliefs that already conform to those of the groups they are joining and they will more readily internalize group norms once they have joined. This will make them more likely to obey the orders of their superiors to employ violence in certain contexts but how restraint in others (Hoover Green 2016, 2018).

We expect that, overall, greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals, relative to material incentives, will restrain rebels' use of sexual violence, but not other forms of non-lethal and lethal abuses. We expect this to be the case for at least three reasons. First, ideologically driven recruits have stronger and more consistent norms against sexual violence than they do other forms of abuses.

Second and relatedly, ideologically committed rebels will be more invested in the success of their groups than their opportunistic counterparts, and thus, will be more likely to obey commands that include restraint in some contexts, but violence in others, when it benefits their groups. Put differently, the strength of command-and-control associated with ideologically driven rebels make it more likely that such groups perpetrate narrower repertoires of violence.

Third, we expect that because groups that mobilize around ideological appeals tend to be more cohesive, they will derive less utility from sexual violence, which is often a tool used to help foster bonds among cadres (Cohen 2013a, 2016).

Normative Constraints

Rebel groups often use ideology to justify certain forms of violence. Again, this is relevant because (ideological) recruitment appeals attract individuals with certain a priori beliefs about violence and affect their propensity to be socialized to engage in certain forms of violence.

Drake (1998) argues that ideology drives the target selection of militant groups. Specifically, Drake posits that the people and institutions that are perceived to be responsible for the violation of the tenants of militant groups' ideologies are viewed as legitimate targets. Perpetrators use ideology to frame their targets as being deserving of such violence and themselves as innocent of

wrongdoing. Thus, ideology plays an important role in efforts to internally and externally justify violence (Drake 1998).

Indeed, various kinds of ideologies are used to justify political violence. Drake (1998, p. 71), for instance, explains that communist ideologies establish a strong sense of moral right and wrong. Drake also notes that this ideology clearly defines people who are considered bad, particularly those from the capitalist ruling class or those who support the ruling class. Eck (2009) describes how the Community Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN – M) used ideological recruitment and indoctrination to promote and legitimize violence against “class enemies.” Left-wing ideologies that focus on the total transformation of society particularly foster violence (Asal et al. 2013).

Thus, even left-wing ideologies, which are often expected to have a restraining effect on civilian killings (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008; Thaler 2012), can sometimes be used to justify violence. While left-wing ideologies might have broad constituencies, anyone who is labeled as an “enemy of the revolution,” or supporters of the capitalist ruling class, can be viewed as a legitimate target. In Colombia, the ELN perpetrated violence against civilians who it labeled as “enemies of the people” (Feldmann 2018, p. 3).

However, left-wing groups view sexual violence in a much different manner. Left-wing ideologies often place strong emphasis on gender equality, and thus, leftist rebel movements often try to restrain their members from engaging in sexual violence (Sarwari 2021). Again, left-wing groups are also typically better at socializing their members to conform to certain behaviors, helping these groups be more restrained in their use of sexual violence (Hoover Green 2016, 2018). While left-wing groups sometimes show restraint in all forms of violence, they sometimes employ ideological justifications for certain types of violence, such as murder.

However, these organizations do not employ ideology to justify sexual violence, and, in fact, have strong ideological reasons to restrain their use of it.

Ethnonationalist ideologies can also spur violence against civilians because of the stark divisions they create between in groups and out groups (e.g., Polo and Gleditsch 2016). The societal divides affected by ethno-nationalist ideologies during civil wars can also contribute to other types of political violence in post-conflict societies (Morrison 2020). Certain ethno-nationalist ideologies have been linked to mass violence as well (Leader Maynard 2019).

However, there is a lack of evidence suggesting that sexual violence is more common in ethnic conflicts (Cohen 2013a). Ethno-nationalist separatist groups seeking international recognition for their claims of territorial sovereignty will also be restrained in their use of sexual violence in order to appear legitimate to the international community (Willis 2023). Furthermore, ethnonationalist movements are often more cohesive because they mobilize around shared identities (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Fjelde and Nilsson 2018), and thus, might derive less utility from sexual violence, which is often used to help strengthen group cohesion (Cohen 2013a, 2016).

In contrast, groups that mobilize around material incentives often employ wider repertoires of violence. Recruits in these organizations are interested in amassing private rewards and are not concerned with the long-term success of their organizations. As a result, they perpetrate a variety of abuses, including lethal and sexual violence, because they have little incentive to show substantially more restraint in the use of some types of violence, relative to others (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). For instance, the RUF in Sierra Leone, and RENAMO in Mozambique (both of whom relied primarily on material incentives for mobilization), engaged in a wide

variety of abuses, including sexual violence and murder (e.g., Weinstein 2005, 2007; Revkin and Wood 2021).

Ideology does not always constrain sexual violence, and in fact, is sometimes used to justify it. Religious rebel groups are more likely to perpetrate such violence as they tend to have little respect for gender equality (Sarwari 2021). The Islamic State even had ideologically driven policies that authorized some types of sexual violence against specific out-groups (Revkin and Wood 2021). Alam and Wood (2022) argue that the Myanmar military's perpetration of sexual violence during its military operations against Rohingya communities in 2017 was, in part, driven by ideological exclusion of these communities. Goldberg (2022) finds that sexual violence within rebel groups takes a variety of forms and is driven by different ideologies.

However, other rebel ideologies still strictly forbid sexual violence. Furthermore, religious groups tend to be more violent overall and often engage in lethal violence at the behest of their ideology (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008; Jasko et al. 2022). Thus, in many cases, such groups might still value lethal violence over sexual violence. For instance, among Boko Haram's actions targeted at women, over 50% were abductions and another 40% were attacks, while approximately 5% of the incidents involved either attacks with remote explosive devices or sexual violence (Matfess 2023, p. 389-90). Additionally, Revkin and Wood (2021) explain that the Islamic State's ideology drove it to use a narrower repertoire of violence (including sexual violence) than non-ideological groups, such as RENAMO and the RUF, used.

To this point, our main argument is that ideological mobilization enables rebel groups to employ narrower repertoires of violence. Specifically, ideology often drives rebels to oppose sexual violence, but not other forms of violence. However, in instances in which militants use ideology to justify sexual violence, it is unlikely that they use ideology to promote restraint in the

perpetration of other abuses. Data from the aforementioned RHRV dataset (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023) reveal that 173 of the 327 groups in the dataset employed some forms of violence against civilians, while showing restraint in sexual violence, in at least one year. In contrast, only 10 groups engaged in sexual violence, but not other forms of violence, for at least one year. Thus, we expect that while some rebel groups will use ideology to justify wide repertoires of violence, many will use it to employ narrower repertoires, particularly those that exclude sexual violence.

In contrast, groups that primarily mobilize recruits with material incentives will have few to no normative commitments against indiscriminate violence. Thus, members of these types of groups will be more likely to employ wide repertoires of violence, as they will be less likely to oppose violence more generally and to normatively distinguish between different types of abuses. Next, we consider the ability of rebel leaders to regulate the repertoires of violence employed by the rank-and-file.

Command and Control

We expect not only that certain repertoires of violence are more normatively acceptable for ideologically driven recruits than other violent strategies, but that ideologically committed rebels will be less likely to be insubordinate, making it easier for leaders to direct them towards desired violent strategies. This is both because ideologically motivated recruits come into groups more willing to engage in pro-group behavior (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006) and because it will be easier to socialize them to group norms. Specifically, we expect that narrower, as opposed to wider, repertoires of violence will be easier to employ when groups have strong levels of command-and-control.

First, ideologically motivated recruits, relative to their materially driven counterparts, are more inclined to engage in behavior that benefits the group, not just themselves. This logic has been used to argue that, because violence against civilians can alienate potential civilian supporters, ideologically motivated recruits will be less likely to engage in indiscriminate violence against these populations (e.g., Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Weinstein 2005, 2007).

In the same way, we expect that ideologically committed recruits will be more likely to aid in the perpetration of any repertoire that is considered to be for the good of the group. This includes a willingness to show restraint in some areas but violence in others. In contrast, because materially driven recruits value personal enrichment over pro-group behaviors, it will be more difficult to convince them to employ restraint in some areas but not others. Thus, a materialistic recruit might engage in both sexual violence and murder for their own benefit and is less likely to be persuaded to employ some types of violence more than others.²

Second, rebel groups have a variety of tools, including recruitment and indoctrination, to socialize combatants to behave in specific ways (Hoover Green 2017). Hoover Green (2016) explains that rebel groups can engage in political indoctrination to better align the preferences of the rank-and-file with those of the leadership. This increases the likelihood that cadres behave in ways that are consistent with the preferences of rebel leaders. Consequently, Hoover Green finds that left-wing militant organizations, who are typically effective at indoctrinating recruits, are better able to restrain their members' use of sexual violence. Political training that emphasizes restraint also reduces the rate at which armed groups kill civilians (Oppenheim and Weintraub 2017).

² Violence, including sexual violence, may itself be a spoil of war for materialistic recruits (Mueller 2000; Mitchell 2004).

Additionally, while ideological indoctrination can sometimes restrain the behavior of rebel soldiers, it can also be used to radicalize members and make them more willing to employ violence (Cantin 2021). Likewise, criminal organizations sometimes use ideology to socialize members into embracing violent norms and practices (Rodgers 2017).

We expect that ideologically committed recruits will be more amenable to such socialization because they place greater value on benefiting the group and because they already (at least partially) buy into the ideology of their groups.

Cohesion

Finally, we expect that the levels of cohesion among the rank-and-file will also shape their repertoires of violence. Cohen (2013a, 2016) posits that because groups that employ forced recruitment are more likely to suffer from low cohesion among the rank-and-file, these organizations tend to be more permissive of sexual violence as such brutal acts of performative violence help foster bonds among the perpetrators.

Rebel organizations that mobilize around ideological appeals are more likely to be cohesive (Weinstein 2005, 2007), and thus, should derive less utility from sexual violence. Indeed, groups that rely more heavily on ideological appeals for recruitment are less likely to engage in multi-perpetrator rape because they do not need to resort to this form of violence to foster cohesion (Soules 2023).

Cohen (2017) expects that sexual violence, relative to other forms of abuses, will be particularly effective at fostering bonds, as sexual violence sends stronger signals of masculinity and power. Thus, if a function of sexual violence in civil wars is to build bonds among members,

then the utility of sexual violence, relative to other forms of violence, is lower for rebels that recruit with ideological appeals.

Testable Implication

Building off prior work (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017), we argue that rebel recruitment strategies affect variation in violent repertoires, not just the decision to use restraint or violence. We expect that ideologically motivated groups and recruits will derive greater utility from some forms of violence over others. Specifically, we posit that greater reliance on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will increase the probability that rebels employ repertoires of violence that involve some forms of civilian victimization, but display restraint in the use of sexual violence, for at least three different reasons.

First, normative commitments lead ideologically motivated recruits to be more averse to the use of some forms of violence than others. In contrast, materially driven groups will more consistently use wide repertoires of violence because they lack normative commitments against violence and are less discriminating in the specific types of abuses they employ.

Second and relatedly, ideologically committed rebels tend to be more obedient than their materially driven counterparts, and thus, it is easier for rebel leaders to direct their use of narrower repertoires of violence. When command-and-control problems are worse, the rank-and-file are more difficult to control, and thus, they will be more likely to employ wide repertoires of violence. Third and finally, sexual violence often serves as a tool to build cohesion among rebel soldiers and is more effective at doing so than other forms of violence. However, rebel groups

that mobilize around ideological appeals tend to be more cohesive, and thus, derive less utility from being permissive of sexual violence.

For all these reasons, we expect that rebel groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, will be more likely to employ narrower repertoires of violence. Specifically, we expect that they will be more likely to use combinations of violence that involve some abuses but restraint in sexual violence. This leads to our core hypothesis that:

H1: Rebel groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve restraint in the use of sexual violence, but perpetration of other types of abuses.

Research Design

Dependent Variable

To capture civilian abuses by rebel groups, we rely on data from the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023). The RHRV dataset builds off existing datasets on the killing of civilians (e.g., Eck and Hultman 2007) and sexual violence (e.g., Cohen and Nordås 2014; Dumaine et al. 2022), by providing information on a variety of types of human rights abuses perpetrated by rebel organizations.

This dataset contains information on groups that were active across the world during the period of 1990 to 2018. It includes information on rebel dyad-years for groups derived from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) dyadic conflict dataset (Harbom, Melander and Wallensteen 2008). Thus, this dataset allows users to not only examine differences in behavior across rebel groups, but differences within these movements over time. The RHRV dataset contains measures of the prevalence of eight types of human rights abuses: sexual violence,

arbitrary killings, torture, detention, forced recruitment, forced displacement, restriction of movement, and property destruction. This allows us to compare sexual violence to a wide variety of other abuses.

Information for these variables was drawn from two different sources: the U.S. State Department and Amnesty International. Two, three-point ordinal indicators were built for each type of abuse in the original dataset: one based on the State Department reports and the other on reports from Amnesty International. The variables all measure whether there were no, occasional or infrequent, or frequent or systematic allegations of each specific type of abuse in a given year.

The core hypothesis is concerned with groups that show restraint in the use of sexual violence but employ other forms of civilian abuses. To capture this, we use the above measures to create a binary indicator of whether a group *did not* employ sexual violence in a given year *but did* employ at least one form of lethal or non-lethal, non-sexual violence (i.e., any form of violence in the RHRV besides sexual violence). Put differently, this variable measures whether groups show restraint in the use of sexual violence but not in the overall use of violence against civilians.³ This repertoire of violence is employed in approximately 47% of the observations and 137 of the 224 groups in the overlapping sample (~61%) employ this repertoire in at least one year. Given the dependent variable is dichotomous, we employ logistic regression analysis to test the hypothesis.

³ We did not include forced recruitment in these initial measures, and instead, used it as a control variable. We did so because forced recruitment is a strong predictor of both sexual (Cohen 2013a, 2016) and lethal (Davis and Jang 2018) violence, and thus, it is important to control for. However, as a robustness check, we construct an alternative version of the dependent variable that includes forced recruitment. We then drop forced recruitment as a control variable. Even with these alternative measures, we continue to find strong support for the hypothesis.

Independent Variable

Theories of civilian victimization often focus on the degree to which groups rely on material incentives or ideological appeals for recruitment. High quality data exist on both the material resources available to groups (Walsh et al. 2018) and their ideologies (e.g., Polo and Gleditsch 2016; Wood and Thomas 2017; Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020; Keels and Wiegand 2020; Basedau Deitch and Zellman 2022). However, rebels' material and ideological resources should not be conflated with their recruitment strategies (Herbst 2000; Soules 2023). Furthermore, these variables do not measure the degree to which groups rely on ideological appeals *relative to* material incentives.

Instead, we employ data from the Rebel Appeals and Incentives Dataset (RAID) (Soules 2023). RAID contains several measures of rebel organizations' recruitment practices, including a five-point ordinal indicator measuring the degree to which groups rely on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment. This variable indicates whether a group recruits entirely with ideological appeals (4), mostly with ideological appeals and some material incentives (3), a relatively even mixture of ideological and material appeals (2), mostly with material incentives and some ideological appeals (1), or entirely with material incentives (0). This variable allows us to assess the conventional wisdom that greater reliance on material incentives for recruitment is associated with more abuses against civilians.

The groups in RAID are taken from the list of actors, that were active between 1989 and 2011, in the Non-State Actor (NSA) dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013), which itself is based off groups in the UCDP dyadic dataset. RAID is neither left nor right censored, and thus, groups enter and exit the dataset when they are born and die. They were simply active

during this period (Soules 2023). 224 of the 232 groups in RAID are also found in the RHRV dataset, providing substantial overlap to leverage for the analysis.

Control Variables

We also control for potentially confounding variables. First, using data from RAID, we control for a binary indicator of whether a group has a multi-ethnic membership, as social heterogeneity affects both groups' recruitment tactics and their treatment of civilians (e.g., Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). We also hold constant the broader ideologies of rebel groups to better ensure that we are capturing the effects of recruitment tactics specifically, not just broader ideologies. We include three separate binary indicators for three different ideologies: nationalist, left-wing, and radical Islamist. These variables are built by combining data from the Women in Armed Rebellion Dataset (WARD) (Wood and Thomas 2017) and the Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence (FORGE) dataset (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020).

Rebels' strength affects their recruitment strategies (Herbst 2000; Sawyer and Andrews 2020) and their treatment of civilians (e.g., Hultman 2007; Polo and Gleditsch 2016). Thus, using data from the NSA dataset, we included a simplified version of the variable measuring rebel groups' strength, relative to the governments they are fighting. We include a three-point ordinal indicator of whether the group is much weaker, weaker, or at parity or stronger.⁴ Relatedly, territorial control also influences militants' mobilization strategies (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2012)

⁴ We collapse the three highest categories of this variable together—parity, stronger, and much stronger—because they comprise only about 8.5% of all observations in the analysis. However, as a robustness check, we rerun the main analysis, using the untransformed version of this variable. We continue to find support for our core hypothesis.

and their treatment of civilians (e.g., Kalyvas 2006; Asal and Nagel 2021). Thus, with a binary indicator from the NSA dataset, we account for whether a group controls territory.

Natural resource wealth also shapes groups' recruitment strategies (Weinstein 2005, 2007) as well as their treatment of civilians (e.g., Wood 2014; Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2018). Using data from the Rebel Contraband Dataset (Walsh et al. 2018), we include a dichotomous measure of whether groups profit from lootable natural resources in a given year. We also control for whether a group receives any support from a foreign state, using data from the NSA dataset, as such support affects both rebel's recruitment tactics (Weinstein 2005, 2007) and their treatment of civilians (Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014).

Rebel groups with clear and effective command-and-control structures can better regulate the use of violence by the rank-and-file (Wood 2009). Thus, with information from the NSA dataset, we include a binary indicator of whether a group has a clear central command. We also include a binary indicator of whether a group employs forced recruitment, using data from the RHRV dataset. Rebels that rely on material incentives are more likely to turn to coercive recruitment (Weinstein 2007) and groups that forcibly recruit are also more likely to perpetrate sexual violence (Cohen 2013a, 2016). Again, this measure of forced recruitment is not built into the dependent variable, however, we conduct alternative tests in which it is, and the results remain consistent. We also control for a group's age in a given year, as rebels' longevity affects their treatment of civilians and ability to mobilize them (Eck 2014).

We also hold constant conflict and country-level factors. We include the UCDP's binary measure of conflict intensity (whether there were a 1,000 or more battle-related deaths in a given year) (Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen 2008), as the overall intensity of conflicts affects both rebels' recruitment tactics (Herbst 2000) and their treatment of civilians (Walsh, Conrad,

and Whitaker 2023). We also employ the Polity Project's 21-point ordinal measure of regime type in the country in which the conflict is occurring (Marshall and Gurr 2021), as press freedom and government repression affect the quality of information available on human rights abuses (Davies and True 2017) and rebels' violence against civilians (e.g., Stanton 2013). Finally, with data from the World Bank, we include a logged measure of a country's per capita GDP, as wealth and state capacity affect groups' mobilization strategies and patterns of violence (e.g., Herbst 2000; Sobek 2010).

Results

The results are displayed in **Table 1**. The standard errors are clustered on the rebel group. Control variables are added gradually to each model to ensure that resulting missing observations are not driving the findings. A positive value for the coefficient of the main independent variable indicates that greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals is associated with a greater probability of employing some forms of abuses against civilians but showing restraint in the use of sexual violence.

In support of the core hypothesis, the results in **Table 1** show that more ideologically driven groups and recruits will be more likely to wield repertoires of violence that show restraint in the use of sexual violence, but not other forms of abuse. Said differently, groups that mobilize recruits around ideological issues tend to employ narrower repertoires of violence. Thus, contrary to the conventional wisdom, ideological-based mobilization does not appear to have a uniform effect on the reduction of different types of violence. Instead, such recruitment strategies are associated with repertoires of violence that involve the perpetration of some abuses, but restraint in other types of violence.

Table 1: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Mixed Repertoires

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.228** (0.0971)	0.213* (0.119)	0.267** (0.115)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		-0.270 (0.274)	-0.136 (0.320)
Nationalist		0.361 (0.269)	0.346 (0.321)
Left-Wing		0.693** (0.294)	0.436 (0.302)
Radical Islamist		0.583** (0.278)	0.241 (0.344)
Relative Rebel Strength		0.156 (0.196)	0.318 (0.217)
Territorial Control		0.0924 (0.256)	0.223 (0.272)
Lootable Resources		0.698*** (0.244)	0.500** (0.246)
External Support		-0.644*** (0.241)	-0.600** (0.273)
Central Command		0.191 (0.432)	0.351 (0.418)
Forced Recruitment		-0.0700 (0.274)	-0.210 (0.300)
Group Age		-0.00908 (0.0120)	-0.0181 (0.0137)
Conflict Intensity			0.488* (0.263)
Polity2			0.0642*** (0.0232)
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.256*** (0.0977)
Constant	-0.789*** (0.299)	-1.454** (0.711)	-4.164*** (0.935)
Observations	1,269	1,056	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1 displays the marginal effects of reliance on ideological recruitment appeals, with the control variables held at their mean values. Groups that rely exclusively on material incentives have only approximately a 29% probability of employing a repertoire of violence that involves the use of some abuses but restrain in sexual violence in a given year. In contrast, when a group relies on only ideological appeals for recruitment, it has about a 54% chance of perpetrating this specific repertoire.

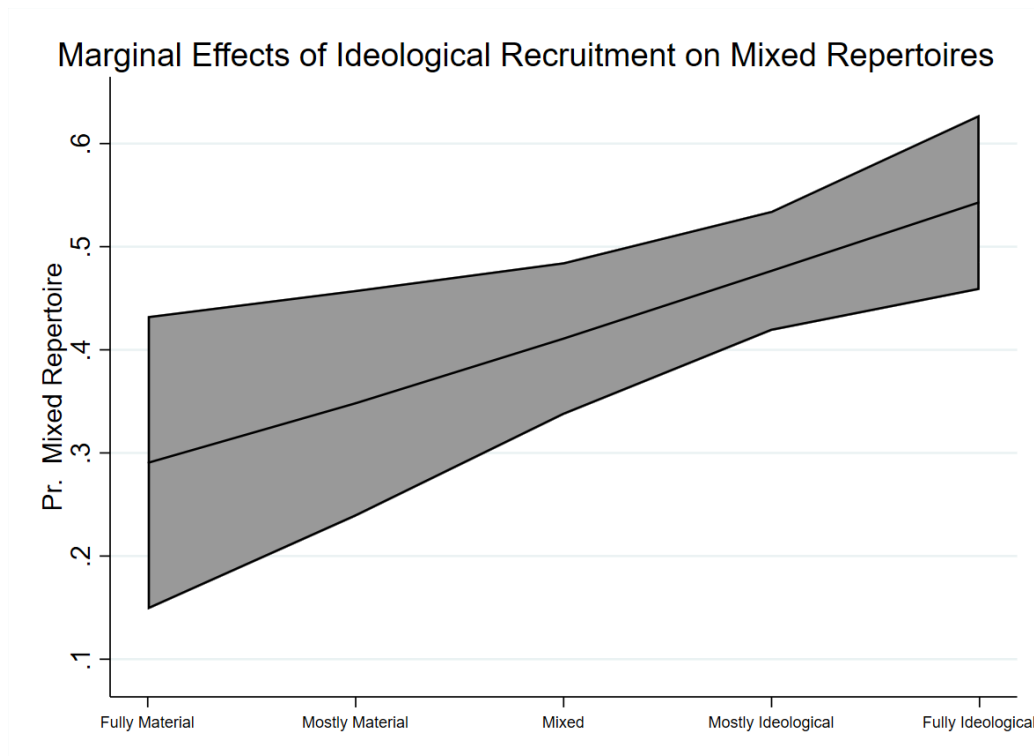


Figure 1: Marginal Effects of Ideological Recruitment on Mixed Repertoires of Violence

Thus, the substantive effects of ideological recruitment on the probability that rebel groups engage in this specific repertoire of violence are fairly large. These effects further challenge the

conventional wisdom, which maintains that reliance on ideological recruitment appeals should substantially reduce the probability that a rebel group abuses civilians.

Robustness Checks

We employ a variety of robustness checks to assess the consistency of our findings. The results are available in the appendix.

Disaggregated Dependent Variables

As a further test of the uniqueness of sexual violence, we analyze how reliance on ideological appeals affects each of the disaggregated types of abuses present in the RHRV dataset. Specifically, we employ binary indicators of every individual abuse in the RHRV dataset and conduct a series of logistic regression analyses, using the same set of control variables from the main analysis.⁵ Said differently, each type of violence (e.g., arbitrary killings, forced detention, torture, etc.) is its own dependent variable in this set of tests.

Greater reliance on ideological appeals has a negative and statistically significant association with sexual violence, providing further support for existing work which argues that such appeals will reduce the probability that groups use sexual violence (e.g., Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Cohen 2013a, 2016). Reliance on ideological appeals has a statistically insignificant association with most of the rest of the dependent variables, and even has a positive association with some of them, including arbitrary killings. The one exception is that there is a positive and statistically

⁵ We also analyze the effects of ideological recruitment on the probability that groups employ forced recruitment, another measure in the RHRV dataset. For this model, we exclude forced recruitment as a control variable.

significant association between reliance on ideological appeals and the probability that groups engage in the forced restriction of the movement of civilian populations.

Thus, there is an absence of evidence that greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals reduces a wide array of human rights abuses perpetrated by rebel groups. However, there is evidence that heavier reliance on ideological appeals does reduce the probability of engaging in sexual violence.

Excluding Non-Abusive Groups

Another potential issue with the main dependent variable is that values of zero can take two different forms. Specifically, a zero can indicate either that the group does employ sexual violence or that it employs no type of violence at all. However, the theory is primarily concerned with comparing groups with wide and narrow repertoires of violence, not those that refrain completely from violence against civilians.

To ensure that groups that do not engage in any violence against civilians are not driving the results, we rerun the main analysis, excluding all observations in which a rebel group did not engage in any of the human rights abuses detailed in the RHRV dataset. Across all models, we continue find support for the core hypothesis. Thus, even when we only compare groups that engage in at least some abuses against civilians, we still find support for the argument that groups that recruit with ideological appeals will show restraint in sexual violence but not other forms of civilian victimization.

Analyzing Non-Abusive Groups

Another related issue is that while reliance on ideological recruitment appeals may encourage narrower repertoires of violence over broader ones, it might have an even greater effect on total restraint. Said differently, if the conventional wisdom is correct that ideological-based mobilization has a comprehensive restraining effect on violence, then such groups might be less likely to employ any abuses at all.

In response to this, we create a binary variable in which a value of one indicates that a group engaged in none of the civilian abuses in a given year while a zero value indicates that they perpetrated at least one. Across all models, reliance on ideological appeals does not have a statistically significant association with the probability that a group refrains from all forms of civilian abuse in a given year. Thus, we continue to not find evidence for the conventional wisdom that ideological mobilization reduces many types of civilian abuses. Overall, we find robust support for our central hypothesis. We now turn to a few illustrative examples to further evaluate our core theoretical argument.

Illustrative Examples

We now turn to discussing a few illustrative examples. These are not intended to serve as fully developed case studies, but rather, as examples of the aforementioned mechanisms at play. The first two examples, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path), employ repertoires of violence that show restraint in the use of sexual violence but extensively employ other forms of abuses. The third example, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), employed an unrestrained repertoire of violence that included high levels of violence including sexual violence. These examples also varied on their use of ideological

appeals and recruitment tactics. The LTTE was an ethno-nationalist group, Sendero Luminoso was a left-wing group, and the RUF did not have a clear ideology instead emphasizing material incentives as part of the diamond trade and using forced recruitment. While these groups operated in very different contexts, their diversity in ideology and recruitment tactics played an important role in explaining the specific repertoires of violence they employed.

LTTE

Wood (2009) highlights the LTTE as a prime example of a group that extensively employed certain forms of violence, while showing significant restraint in the use of sexual violence. Wood explains that sexual violence was explicitly prohibited by the group's leadership and that perpetrators were severely punished. Indeed, there are relatively few reports of sexual violence perpetrated by members of the group. However, Wood notes that the LTTE engaged extensively in other forms of violence, including indiscriminate murder, torture, and forced displacement, including the forced displacement of 75,000 Muslim civilians from the Jaffna Peninsula (Wood 2009, p. 147). Wood also points out that even when the group was engaging in widespread ethnic cleansing and mass displacement, it perpetrated very little sexual violence. While the group did engage in violence against Tamils, its most frequent targets were Muslims and Sinhalese civilians (Wood 2009).

Wood argues that the prohibition against sexual violence was enforced from the top-down through both socialization and coercive punishment. Specifically, she explains that a combination of rigorous training and enforcement of a strict code of conduct limited the perpetration of sexual violence. Wood also notes that cultural prohibitions against premarital sex

and non-marital rape could have also contributed, though she expects that these organizational mechanisms would have restrained sexual violence even in the absence of these cultural norms.

As noted earlier, we still expect that it will be easier to both socialize and control cadres who come in with ideological motives. Thus, the fact that the LTTE both relied primarily on ideological recruitment appeals (Soules 2023) and at least initially sought out highly committed individuals (Wood 2009), means that it might have been easier for the leadership to socialize combatants to enforce certain behaviors than it would have been if the ranks were swelled with opportunistic, uncommitted recruits.

Cronin-Furman and Arulthas (2021) argue that the LTTE's constituencies largely endorsed the group's use of extreme violence because it viewed the group as a legitimate force, including relative to other Tamil militant movements. This legitimacy has been attributed, depending on the source, to both the perceptions that the LTTE was able to protect the Tamil population from further government abuses and that the group was committed to Tamil nationalism. The groups' ideology also contributed to the demonizing of Muslim and Sinhalese civilians, as well as reinforcing desires for revenge against government violence, which helped spur high levels of violence by the group (Dharmawardhane 2014).

Thus, the Tamil Tigers were able to employ ideology to promote certain forms of violence, even though it worked actively to restrain sexual violence. Certain forms of violence, such as the murder and forced displacement of ethnic groups could help achieve its goal of creating an independent, ethnic-based state in ways that sexual violence simply would not.

Sendero Luminoso

Sendero Luminoso (hereby SL) fought a long and bloody civil war with the Peruvian Government that began in 1980. The group had an extreme left-wing ideology and sought to overthrow the government. The group pursued ideologically committed individuals and relied heavily on ideological appeals for recruitment (e.g., Weinstein 2007; Soules 2023).

The SL employed extremely violent tactics. The group began by employing violence to maintain order in communities that it controlled and eventually began publicly executing unpopular and transgressive members of communities as a means of establishing “popular justice” (Weinstein 2007, p. 85). Leiby (2009a, p. 77) writes that “Unlike other leftist rebel groups in Latin America, the Shining Path did not accept violence as simply necessary, but celebrated its use.”

The SL sometimes used sexual violence to punish civilians (Sharlach 2009) and some of their sexual abuses were not always classified as such in government reports (Leiby 2009b). While the group did engage in sexual violence, it did so in a less systematic manner than it did for other forms of violence (Boesten and Fisher 2012). Indeed, while the SL is estimated to have been responsible for 54% of all disappearances and deaths during the conflict, the SL (and the MRTA, to a lesser extent), were estimated to have been responsible for between approximately 10 - 20% of reported sexual abuses (depending on the definition used), which were less common overall in the conflict (Leiby 2009b; Wood 2009). Thus, while the SL committed a variety of atrocities, it perpetrated some types of abuse much more frequently than others.

However, the group still made efforts to restrain the use of sexual violence (see Nordås and Cohen 2021) and it explicitly prohibited the practice (Leiby 2009a, endnote 20), though it was

not always successful at enforcing this prohibition. Why did the SL at least nominally try to prohibit the use of sexual violence by its cadres, while embracing other forms of violence?

As noted above, left-wing ideologies promote norms against sexual violence as a part of their effort to promote gender equality (Sarwari 2021). Left-wing groups are also typically better equipped to socialize members to restrain them from such abuses (Hoover Green 2016, 2018). Thus, its ideology would make the SL less likely to engage in sexual violence. The group also relied primarily on ideological appeals for recruitment (Soules 2023).

The SL justified other uses of violence by arguing that they were necessary to combat economic disparities that it claimed were much more brutal and deadly than any of its tactics (Osborn 2007). Indeed, the group framed its extreme acts of violence, including the murder and torture of many civilians deemed to be enemies of the revolution, as being necessary for the revolution (Osborn 2007). The group also displaced many people, as it sometimes burned down entire villages in which civilian opponents resided (Nolan 2019). The SL also used violence to “purify” society, which included the execution of people accused of petty theft (Blake 2017). As part of its efforts to “cleanse” or “purify” society, the group also targeted sexual minorities, including through murder and forced detention (Tschantret 2018). Sexual violence was also sometimes used to punish individuals for perceived opposition to the revolution (Sharlach 2009), but again, most of the group’s violence against civilians took other forms.

Thus, the SL engaged in a variety of forms of abuse at behest of its ideology and it primarily mobilized around ideological issues. While it was not always successful in doing so, it did sometimes try to prevent its members from engaging in sexual violence. While killing political opponents and sexual minorities served its ideological goals of fighting for revolution and the

“purification” of society, engaging in sexual violence at the same rates could have undermined its commitment to left-wing principles.

RUF

The RUF launched an insurgency in Sierra Leone in the early 1990s to overthrow the All People’s Congress, a dominant party that employed patronage through control of the diamond trade while governing over a broader collapse of the country. Originally beginning as a student political movement, the RUF eventually shifted from student revolutionaries to unemployed antisocial rebels (Weinstein 2005). Over time the group further abandoned ideology as a core concern becoming increasingly interested in the diamond trade and reliant on the help of an external patron (i.e., Charles Taylor; Weinstein 2005).

While ideology was present at the foundation of the group, this ideology was mostly absent by the time the RUF prepared itself for insurgency. Rather than relying on ideological incentives to attract recruitment, the RUF relied on material bribes and forced recruitment to maintain and expand its force (Weinstein 2005). One of the original student leaders referred to RUF recruits as the “wrong kind of individuals” (Weinstein 2007, 304). These were individuals without local roots, unemployed, thugs, drug users, uneducated, and were neither connected to the educated urban classes, nor integrated into rural networks (Weinstein 2007). They often spoke different languages and did not have close connections to one another before introduction into the group (Cohen 2016). Importantly, when the insurgency was launched the leadership of the RUF relied on these uncommitted revolutionaries alongside hardcore National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) fighters, who were already socialized into extreme violence. Weinstein described the recruitment base in the following way, “the lumpen youth and the NPFL fighters shared a

common commitment to maintaining the flow of material rewards, rather than a political ideology or shared ethnic allegiance.” (2005, 617). Recruits to the RUF were socialized into resource extraction, rather than political belief or ideology, and material rewards through diamond looting, taxes, and loot/pillage came to be key to maintaining the insurgent force (Weinstein 2005). Thus, a reliance on material incentives and forced recruitment did not lead to a cohesive set of beliefs, strategies, principles or identities (Weinstein 2005)

During the war the RUF was known for its extreme violence, including amputations, torture, rape, killing, and cannibalism. Their use of sexual violence included “rape, gang-rape, the abductions of girls and women for forced labour and sexual slavery, forced marriage to a combatant, forced impregnation and abortion, insertion of objects into genital cavities, forced incest, and sexual mutilation with burning wood and hot oil” (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007, 58). Virgination rape was also a common practice. Sexual violence by the RUF manifested in extreme ways. “They forced boys and men to rape their mothers and wives. They sexually assaulted and then disembowelled pregnant women. They mutilated women’s genitals with knives, burning wood and gun barrels.” (Farr 2009, 8).

When discussing the causes of sexual violence in the RUF, Cohen (2016) highlights two explanations: 1. Opportunism/greed, 2. Combatant socialization. Both of these explanations are rooted in forms of recruitment separate from ideological appeals and subsequent socialization using an ideological framing as is seen with the LTTE and SL. Cohen (2016) finds some support that opportunism/greed explained the observed patterns of violence in Sierra Leone. For example, looting behavior was highly correlated with rape in the data from both the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the ABA/Benetech Sierra Leone War Crimes Documentation survey. While, the frequent use of forced recruitment makes it unlikely that many

recruits joined explicitly to partake in material incentives, 1 in 5 fighters in the RUF were offered money (whether abducted or volunteer forces), and individuals were 6 times more likely to participate in the RUF if offered money or diamonds (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008).

In addition, Cohen (2016) finds support for higher rates of sexual violence being partially the result of a lack of accountability for the RUF because of their access to diamond resources.

While the RUF did have some level of discipline and control over soldiers in areas where they relied on civilian support (Jo 2015) or had established clear control (Marks 2013), their access to natural resource revenue and external sponsors (i.e., Charles Taylor in Liberia) made the RUF generally unaccountable to civilians and society. “When a rebel group has violence-approving sponsors and exploits natural resources, deliberate and unchecked violations of international law are the predictable outcome” (Jo 2015, 68).

Cohen (2016) finds the greatest support for a combatant socialization argument whereby sexual violence, particularly gang-rape, was used to build social cohesion among units that come from disparate backgrounds, often through forced recruitment. The vast majority of recruits to the RUF, especially later in the group’s lifespan, came from forcible recruitment. Cohen’s fieldwork suggests that sexual violence in the RUF was a largely bottom-up process of socialization rather than a strategic top-down campaign (2016). Fighters viewed rape as “fun” and “entertainment”, and were “pleased”, “bragged about enjoying it”, and would recount their “sexual prowess” amongst peers. The general tone surrounding sexual violence was one of camaraderie, where rebels had fun, joked around, and were jubilated (Cohen 2013b, 404). Victims were generally selected indiscriminately rather than targeted routinely or systematically based on some ethnic, political, or economic identity (Cohen 2016). In the absence of strong

ethnic, political, religious, or other ideological ties, recruits needed alternative ways to build cohesion at the unit level and to socialize into properly accepted behavior.⁶

In the case of the RUF, the lack of external constraints placed the impetus on the internal structure of the group to generate accountability to rein in sexual violence, which was not a strategically ordered behavior. However, the lack of ideological focus in recruitment hampered the group's ability to attract and staff ideologically motivated recruits, and led them to pursue more violent socialization patterns to build cohesion than might be employed by a group that leverages ideological socialization (i.e., political education; Hoover Green 2016, 2018). The emphasis on material incentives, backed by control of diamonds and external sponsorship, and the frequent use of forced recruitment, led to a combination of recruit pools and socialization behavior that led to at minimum broad tolerance for brutal forms of sexual violence. This does not mean that the RUF was incapable of disciplining its soldiers. The RUF would discipline soldiers, including frequent use of capital punishment, if fighters broke group rules or failed to obey orders. This behavior even consisted of some rules and punishments surrounding sexual violence (Marks 2013). However, this type of accountability was to maintain control of the group, not to deter or punish crimes against civilians (Jo 2015), and it did not align the preferences of recruits to that of some broader ideological vision or grand top-down strategy.

⁶ It is also worth noting that, while some scholars suggest that integration of female recruits should lead to higher gender equality, the RUF was composed of 24.4% female combatants (higher than the state forces), yet perpetrated 85.6% of rapes, of which 1 in 4 had female participation (Cohen 2013b). However, because of the high level of forcible recruitment, any ideology suggested by a selection argument is not relevant in the example of the RUF. Ideologies that might constrain were not present, and levels of sexual violence and other unrestrained violence were very high.

Discussion and Conclusion

There is a strong, conventional wisdom that rebel groups will show more restraint in their treatment of civilians when they rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment. However, such theories often overlook how rebel recruitment tactics affect the combinations of violence they employ, not just the presence or absence of abuses against civilians. In particular, there are many rebel groups who are extremely abusive on some dimensions, but then show restraint in the use of sexual violence. Furthermore, there has been a lack of systematic, cross-group, quantitative analysis testing the implications of these arguments.

To remedy this, we use novel data on the persuasive recruitment practices of rebel groups to investigate how these mobilization strategies affect their repertoires of violence. Specifically, we are interested in analyzing why some rebel groups show restraint in the perpetration of sexual violence, but not other abuses. We argue that groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more likely to employ this specific repertoire of violence. This is because ideologically committed recruits affect groups norms, the strength of command-and-control, and cohesion in ways that are conducive to this specific repertoire. We find strong support for our argument that greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals increases the probability that rebels employ repertoires of violence that involve restraint in sexual violence but not other forms of abuse.

There are several potential avenues for future research. First, scholars could examine how rebel recruitment tactics affect the segments of the population (e.g., ethnic or religious groups) they choose to attack. Relatedly, future quantitative analysis could more clearly distinguish between the effects of recruitment practices on indiscriminate versus discriminate violence. Second, researchers could investigate how recruitment tactics affect other types of violence employed by rebel groups, such as mass casualty events. Third, scholars could examine factors that condition the relationship between recruitment

tactics and civilian victimization. For example, how might external support affect the willingness of ideologically and materially driven groups to abuse civilians?

The ways in which rebel groups recruit appear to have a significant influence on how they treat civilians. This paper contributes to our understanding of how and why rebel groups victimize civilians. We challenge the conventional wisdom by showing that rebel recruitment strategies affect the combinations of violence groups employ, and that their impact is more complex than just completely restraining, or completely incentivizing, abuses against civilians.

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